

Notes on a small collection of Birds from the New Hebrides,
with a description of a new species of *MERULA*,

By E. P. RAMSAY, F.Z.S., &c., Curator of the Australian
Museum.

The Museum has lately received two small collections of Birds, in spirits, from the Islands of the New Hebrides group, for which we are indebted to Dr. Mackinlay, of H.M.S. "Nymphe," and to the Rev. H. A. Robertson, now stationed on Erromanga. Mr. Robertson's specimens were obtained on the mountains during a recent inland excursion on that island. So little reliable information is on record respecting the ornithology of these islands, that any additional authentic notes on their avifauna will always be acceptable.

1.—*CIRCUS WOLFFI*, Gurney, *P.Z.S.*, 1865, p. 823.

Two fine specimens of a *Circus*, which I must, for the present, refer to this species, although they do not altogether agree with Mr. Gurney's description in the "Proceedings" above quoted. I am inclined to believe them to be only varieties of *Circus gouldii*, Bp.

Loc., Erromanga.

2.—*MERULA ALBIFRONS*. *sp. nov.*

Adult male. The whole of the head, neck, and chest, white; mantle, and all the upper and under surface, dark brown, almost blackish-brown; under tail-coverts tipped and mesially shaded with whitish; quills of the wings and tail blackish brown; tibial feathers yellowish brown; bill and legs yellow.

Total length, 7·7 in. (in the flesh, spirit specimen); wing, 4 in.; tail, 2·8; tarsus, 1·3; bill from forehead, 0·85; from gape, 1 in.; from nostril, 0·6 in.

There are a few white-tipped feathers on the abdomen. The type specimen has been preserved in spirits, and has the head and neck discolored, but some purely white feathers on the chest

show that these parts were originally white in the adult, while a feather here and there on the head, seems to indicate that in the young bird these parts were of a dull smoky brown.

Hab. Mountainous parts of the island of Eromanga, New Hebrides. Received from the Rev. H. A. Robertson.

The following species have been examined and compared with this new species:—

M. vanicorensis, *Q. et Gaim.* Samoan Islands.

M. vitiensis, *E. L. Layard.* Fiji.

M. ruficeps, *Ramsay.* Fiji.

M. tempesti, *E. L. Layard.* Fiji.

M. xanthopus, *Forst.* New Caledonia.

M. pritzbuesi, *E. Layard.* New Caledonia.

M. poliocephalus, *Latham.* Norfolk Island.

M. vinitincta, *Gould.* Lord Howes Island.

It differs from all in having a purely white chest, the head and neck, which are slightly discoloured with the spirits, were, without doubt, white also in the living bird. *M. ulietensis*, Gm. I have not seen.

3.—*HALCYON JULIÆ*, *Heine*; *Sharpe Monog. Alced.*, pl. 86.

Several specimens agreeing well with Mr. R. B. Sharpe's description (*op. cit.*), but are somewhat larger in their admeasurements; for a description of the species from *Tutuila* in the flesh, see P.L.S. N.S.W., Vol. II., p. 141, *Hab.* Havanah Harbour, Vela Harbour, &c., Dr. Mackinlay, Rev. H. A. Robertson.

4.—*MYZOMELA CARDINALIS*.

This is probably the species alluded to by Mr. E. L. Layard (*Hist.* 1878, p. 270), but is certainly not *M. sanguinolenta*, which species is confined to Australia. *Hab.* Tanna; Dr. Mackinlay.

5.—*GLYCIPHILA FLAVO-TINCTA*, *G. R. Gray.*

Found throughout the groups; Tanna, Havanah Harbour, &c.

6.—*ZOSTEROPS FLAVIFRONS*, *Gm.*; *G. R. Gray*; *Voy. Curacoa*, pl. 7, fig. 1.

Hab. Tanna; Vela Harbour, Dr. Mackinlay; Eromanga, &c. These specimens agree very well with Dr. Gray's description

(*op. cit.*), but the figure there shows a dark ring round the white eye-ring, which is not found in the skins before me.

7.—*ZOSTEROPS GRISEONOTA*, *G. R. Gray.*

There is no difference in the plumage of the sexes.

Hab. Eromanga; Rev. H. A. Robertson.

8.—*GRAUCALUS CALEDONICUS*, *Gm.*

Two specimens.

Hab. Eromanga; Dr. Mackinlay, Rev. H. A. Robertson.

9.—*LALAGE*, *sp.*

? *Lalage pacifica*, *Gmelin.*

Adult male. Head, back of the neck, wings, back and tail black, with a faint greenish metallic gloss; rump and upper tail-coverts, bluish ashy grey; chin, throat, the lower part of the ear-coverts, under wing-coverts (except the under margin of the shoulders), the basal half of all the inner webs of all the wing quills, and the whole of the under surface of the body and the under tail-coverts, pure white; tail black, with the outer three feathers on either side largely tipped with white, the fourth quill slightly tipped, and the fifth with a mere indication of white. The margins of the wings on the under surface are black, a few feathers at the base of the primaries are margined with white, no white on the first primary quill. On the upper surface of the wing, the secondaries are very narrowly margined with white, the scapularies and their coverts, largely on both webs; the central wing-coverts white, with black shaft lines, and black tips and margins, forming a broad patch of white across the wing, a little below the base of the secondaries; all the primary-coverts black, the greater senes of the secondary-coverts white on both webs at the base, and also slightly tipped with white; the lores are black, and no white extends above the eye; legs, feet, and bill, black.

Total length of the flesh, 7·1 in; wing, 3·3; tail, 3·1; tarsus, 1in.; bill, from forehead, 0·7, from gape, 0·8, from nostril, 0·4.

Hab. Mountains of Eromanga; sent by the Rev. H. A. Robertson. This is, perhaps, the *L. pacifica*, *Gm.*, of which, unfortunately, I have no description to compare it with.

- 10.—*MYIAGRA MELAMERA*, *G. R. Gray, Cat. Bds. Trop. Islds. Pacif. p. 18.*

Hab. Havanah Harbour, Eromanga, &c.; Dr. Mackinlay. Males, females, and young in spirits, which I have carefully dissected; the females have rich chestnut throat, breast, and sides, as described by Dr. Gray, *op. cit.* Mr. E. L. Layard is probably in error in stating that the female (*Ibis*. 1878, *vol. II.*, No. 7, *p. 271.*) has the throat black. I have invariably found, that wherever the males and females in the genus *Myiagra* resemble one another, both have the throat chestnut or white.

- 11.—*ERYTHRURA CYANOVIRENS*, *Peale.*

Hab. Eromanga; Rev. H. A. Robertson.

- 12.—*TRICHOGLOSSUS MASSENÆ*, *Bp.*

Hab. Eromanga, Havanah Harbour, Tanna, &c.; Dr. Mackinlay, Rev. H. A. Robertson.

- 13.—*TRICHOGLOSSUS PALMARUM*, *Forst.*

Hab. Havanah Harbour; Dr. Mackinlay.

- 14.—*CHALCOPHAPS CHRYSOCHLORA*, *var. Sandwichensis, Gould.*

Hab. Vela Harbour; Dr. Mackinlay.

- 15.—*MACROPYGIA MACKINLAYI*, *Ramsay, P.L.S., N.S.W., vol. II, p. 286.*

Hab. Tanna; Dr. Mackinlay.

- 16.—*CALENAS FERRUGINEA*, *Forst.*

Hab. Havanah Harbour; Dr. Mackinlay.

- 17.—*PTILOPUS APICALIS*, *Bp.*

Hab. Havanah Harbour, Vela Harbour, &c.; Dr. Mackinlay.

This is probably the species referred to by Mr. E. L. Layard as *P. Greyi* (*Ibis*, 4th Ser., *vol. II.*, No. 7, *p. 275.*)

- 18.—*PTILOPUS (CHRYSAENA) CORRIEI*, *Ramsay, P.L.S., N.S.W., vol. I., p. 133.*

Hab. Mallicola, Dr. Corrie; Vela Harbour, Dr. Mackinlay.

- 19.—*CARPOPHAGA PACIFICA*, *Grn.*

Hab. Eromanga; Rev. H. A. Robertson.